Writing reference

What to expect in the exam

The writing section follows the reading section of paper 1. Paper 1 (both reading and writing) lasts 1 hour and 30 minutes. You do three tasks.

- In part 1, there is one task which you must do.
- In part 2, there is one task which you must do.
- In part 3, you choose one of two tasks.

Writing part 1: sentence transformations

In part 1:

- There are five questions (questions 1—5) and an example.
- Each question has a complete sentence followed by a sentence with a gap in the middle.
- All the sentences, including the example, are about the same topic.
- You get 1 mark for each correct answer, giving a total of 5 marks.

Part 1 tests your ability to:

- Understand grammatical structures at PET level.
- Rephrase information.
- Write grammatically correct PET-level sentences.

How to do part 1

1. Make sure you are familiar with all the grammar areas you need to study for PET.
2. Study the example. This will introduce the topic of the live questions, and remind you of the kinds of changes you will have to make.
3. For each question 1-5, look carefully at the first sentence and think about its meaning.
4. Study both sentences and decide what grammar point the question is testing, e.g. Active to passive, too and enough, comparative adverbs, etc.
5. Think of different ways of saying the same thing as the first sentence.
6. Choose the correct words and fill them in on the question paper. Remember that short forms like don't count as two words.
7. Read through both sentences again, checking that they mean exactly the same.
8. Write the one, two or three words on your answer sheet.
9. Check that you haven't made any spelling mistakes.

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Writing part 2

In part 2, you:

- Are asked to write a short message of between 35 and 45 words in the form of an email, note, postcard, etc.
- Are told who you are writing to and why.
- Must include three content points which may ask you to thank, invite, suggest, explain, apologise, etc.
- Should open and close the letter in a suitable way (e.g. Hi, best wishes).
- Can get a maximum of 5 marks for this part.

Do not spend too long on this part or you may not have enough time to answer the longer part 3 writing task where you can get a maximum of 15 marks.

Part 2 tests your ability to:

- Read and understand a task.
- Write a clear message within a word limit.
- Organise and connect your ideas well.

You must:

- Include all three content points or you won't be given more than 3 marks, even if it is a very good answer.
- Make sure your message is clear.
- Be careful with your grammar, punctuation and spelling.
- Remember that short forms like don't count as two words.
- Write your answer in pencil on the answer sheet.

You mustn't:

- Write a lot more than 45 words or your answer might not be as clear as a shorter answer.
- Write less than 35 words. A short answer is unlikely to include all three content points. If you write 25 words or less, you won't be given more than 2 marks.

How to do part 2

1. Read the task very carefully. Underline the following:

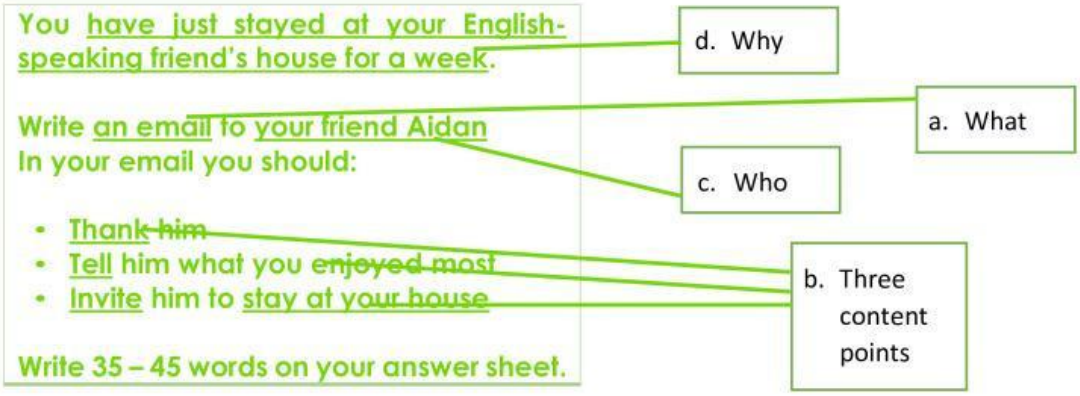
   Why you are writing

   What you are writing

   Who you are writing to

   The three content points

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2. Think of some ways to communicate each content point and note them down, e.g. Thank you ever so much for …
3. Think about how you can connect your ideas with words like *but, and* or *because*.
4. Decide how you are going to open and close your message. Think about whether the message is formal or informal.
5. Write your complete text, including all three content points. Look back at the question, if necessary.
6. Don't waste time writing a rough copy. Remember you will need to leave enough time to do writing part 3.
7. Read the question and your answer again. Make sure you have:
   - Included all three content points.
   - Written a clear message and connected your ideas.
   - With and, but, etc.
   - Checked you haven't made mistakes with grammar, spelling or punctuation.
   - Opened and closed the message in an appropriate way.
   - Written 35—45 words.

In the PET writing **part 2** exam you may have to thank someone, explain, invite, apologise, suggest, ask for something, etc.

Ways of thanking someone
Thank you / thanks (ever so much) for (giving me) such a nice present.
It was very kind of you to give me such a nice present. (formal)

Ways of explaining
I can't come to your party because I have to study for my exams.
I have to study for my exams. That's why I can't come to your ...

Ways of inviting
I'm going to the new Turkish restaurant. Would you like to come?
I'm going to the new Turkish restaurant. I'd like you to come.

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Ways of apologising
I'm so sorry for breaking your camera.
I'm so sorry that I broke your camera.

Ways of suggesting
Why don't we go to the cinema?
How/what about (going to) the cinema?
Shall we go to the cinema?

Ways of asking
Can I borrow your camera, please?
Could you lend me your camera, please?
Would it be possible to borrow your camera, please?

Exercise

Write what you would say in the following situations.

1. You can't meet your friend at the weekend. Apologise.
   I'm sorry that I can't meet you at the weekend.
2. You want to borrow your friend's camera. Explain why.
   .....
3. You spent two wonderful weeks at your English-speaking friend's house. Thank him/her.
   .....
4. Your English-speaking friend has never been to your country. Invite him/her.
   .....
5. You've arranged to meet an English-speaking friend. Suggest a place to meet.
   .....
6. You forgot your friend's birthday. Apologise.
   .....
7. You're going to Hugh's party. Ask him for directions to his house.
   .....

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Writing part 3

In part 3, you must choose from **one** of two writing tasks.

- The tasks you choose from are an informal letter and a story.
- You are given some written information, but you must answer the task with your own ideas.
- You must write about 100 words.
- Your letter or story is marked out of a possible 15, so this is the most important part of the writing section.

Part 3 tests your ability to:

- Complete the task you have chosen.
- Organise your text well.
- Use a variety of grammatical structures and vocabulary.
- Link your sentences together.
- Write in a suitable style, e.g. Friendly and informal in a letter to a friend.
- Use correct spelling and punctuation avoid making many mistakes.
- Avoid errors that make it difficult to understand your writing.

In this part you might need to show you can:

- Describe a place, something you own, or a person you know.
- Give somebody practical information.
- Describe how something happened.
- Say how you feel about something, or about something that has happened.
- Express your opinions or say what makes you happy.
- Say what you hope for or what you regret.

How to do part 2

1. Read the questions and choose the task you think you can do better. When you are deciding, think about what you are good at and what you are not so good at. Are you more confident writing letters to friends, or telling a story?
2. Read the task that you choose very carefully. Underline the following:

- **Who** will read your text, e.g. An English— speaking friend, your English teacher.
- The **key words** in the instructions, e.g. Story, begin, holidays.
- The main points you must write about, for example:

There's a really big shopping centre quite near my apartment. I go there every Saturday.
What are the shops like near where you live?
What do you like buying most?

Main points that you must answer

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3. Think about the topic and how you will write about it. Quickly note down as many ideas as you can.
4. Choose your best ideas and write a brief plan, putting these ideas under separate headings.
5. Think of some useful words and phrases for each paragraph and note them down, but don't write a full, rough copy. You won't have time to write it all twice.
6. Decide what style you need to write in: formal or informal.
7. Write your text, following your plan and keeping to the topic.
8. Try to make your handwriting as clear and easy to read as possible.
9. Use as many different kinds of grammatical structures and as much vocabulary as you can.
10. Form longer sentences by using linking expressions like *so* and *because*.
11. At the end, check you have written about the right number of words. If you have written fewer than 80 words, you will lose marks. If you write many more than 100, you might make more mistakes.
12. Make sure you leave enough time to check your completed text for mistakes and correct them. Making a lot of corrections doesn't matter if they are easy to read.

Informal letter

- When you write your letter, you should:
- Imagine the short text you read is written to you.
- Organise your text properly, using short paragraphs.
- Put the opening, e.g. Dear daisy, the closing, e.g. Love, and your name on separate lines.
- Use friendly, informal language.
- Give reasons and examples, using linking words.

Expressions used at the beginning of an informal letter

Dear ... Hello ... Hi ...
It's always good to hear from you.
Thanks (very much) for your letter.
It was great to hear from you.
Sorry I've taken so long to write back, but ...
Sorry I haven't written for so long, but ...
I've got so much to tell you.
I'm writing to say ...
This is just a quick note to say...

Expressions to give advice and make suggestions

If I were you...
Why don't we/you ...?
I suggest ...
I think you should ...
It might help to ... / you could try

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Expressions to ask for and give information

Could you tell me about ...
I need to know ...
Let me tell you about ...
I thought you'd like to know about ...

Expressions to give your opinion

I agree with you that ...
In my opinion, ...
It seems to me that ...
I believe that ...
My favourite is ...

Expressions used at the end of an informal letter

Well, that's all for now.
I'd better finish now because.
Say 'hello' to your family from me.
Give my love to everyone.
Don't forget to write soon.
Looking forward to hearing from you.
Love, lots of love, best wishes, all the best, bye for now,

Model letter

Dear mike,
Thanks for your letter and congratulations on your fifteenth birthday! I hope you had lots of beautiful presents.
Mine isn't till November, but I'm already getting excited. I always get nice presents from my mum and dad, as well as loads of birthday cards – some of them are quite funny. There's a cake, too. This year it'll have 16 candles on it.
Later on, my mates take me out somewhere special, like a concert. That's always fun. But the best thing is that I can do what I like all day and no one can say anything because it's my birthday!
Anyway, that's all for now because I've got to go out. Write soon.
All the best,
Diana

Friendly beginning

Thank the other person for their letter and say something about what they wrote

Answer their questions

Say why your letter is quite short, and ask a reply

Friendly ending

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Story

When you write a story, you **should always**:

- Check whether the words you are given in the instructions are the title or the first line.
- Write about the topic suggested by the title / use the first sentence you have been given.
- Get ideas by asking yourself who? What? Where? When? and How?
- Decide before you start writing what will happen at the beginning, in the middle and at the end. Will the ending be happy, sad - or a mystery?
- Make sure each part of your text develops the story.
- Use time expressions, e.g. Before, after, during, when, while, until, first, then, next, immediately, as soon as, suddenly, finally, in the end.
- Use a variety of tenses, e.g. the past simple for events, the past continuous to describe the background, the past perfect for things that happened before something else when you are already talking about the past.

You **should try to**:

- Set the scene at the beginning by using description.
- Include some interesting details.
- Use some unusual vocabulary to make the story more lively.
- Include some direct speech, e.g. 'What was that strange noise?'
- Say how you, or the main character, felt at different times in the story.
- Create interest during your story, possibly with a surprise at the end.

Read this part 3 task and answer the questions that follow.

- Your English teacher has asked you to write a story.
- Your story must have this title:

  The lost wallet
- Write your story in about 100 words on your answer sheet.

1. What are the key words in the instructions?
2. Do the instructions give the title or the first line?
3. How many words should the answer be?

Exercise

Study this model story and the comments next to it. Answer these questions.

1. Is the text written in the first person (I), or the third person (he/she/it)?
2. What adjectives and adverbs are used to describe the scene and the people?
3. What kind of ending does it have?
4. Match each of comments a-f with words in the text.

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Model story

a. Good use of tenses to set the scene

The lost wallet

Arthur was standing on the crowded platform of a busy underground station when his wallet was stolen. Upset and angry, he realised that with it he had lost his identity card and all his cash.

He never expected to see it again, but months later was a knock at the door. 'I believe this is yours,' said a nervous stranger, who handed him his wallet and then hurried off into the night. Arthur looked anxiously inside it.

He couldn't believe his luck, because his money was there and so was his ID card. Something, though, was wrong. That was his card, but with someone else's photo on it. Then he understood. They had wanted to steal his identity.

b. Describes how he felt

c. Direct speech brings the story to life

d. Creates interest

e. Surprise at the end

f. Partly explains what happened

Adding interest At that moment, ... Suddenly, ... Without any warning, ... Then I realised that ...
Saying when things happened It all started when ... A little later ... Meanwhile, ... Sometime later, ...
Using adjectives and adverbs in descriptions It was a fantastic concert. The dinner was absolutely delicious. I felt completely miserable. They both felt so scared ... It was a wonderful party.
Bringing a story to an end It was the best day of my life. Suddenly, I woke up. Then I realised it was all over.

LIVEWORKSHEETS